



FACING THE DANGER: Interviews with 20 Anti-Nuclear Activists

by Sam Totten & Martha Wescoat Totten

(Trumansburg, NY, The Crossing Press, 1984)

GREEN POLITICS: The Global Promise

by Fritjof Capra & Charlene Spretnak (in collaboration with Rüdiger Lutz)

(New York, E.P. Dutton, 1984)

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE: Music and the Struggle For Peace

edited by Marianne Philbin (Dedication by Yoko Ono)

(Chicago, Chicago Review Press, 1983)

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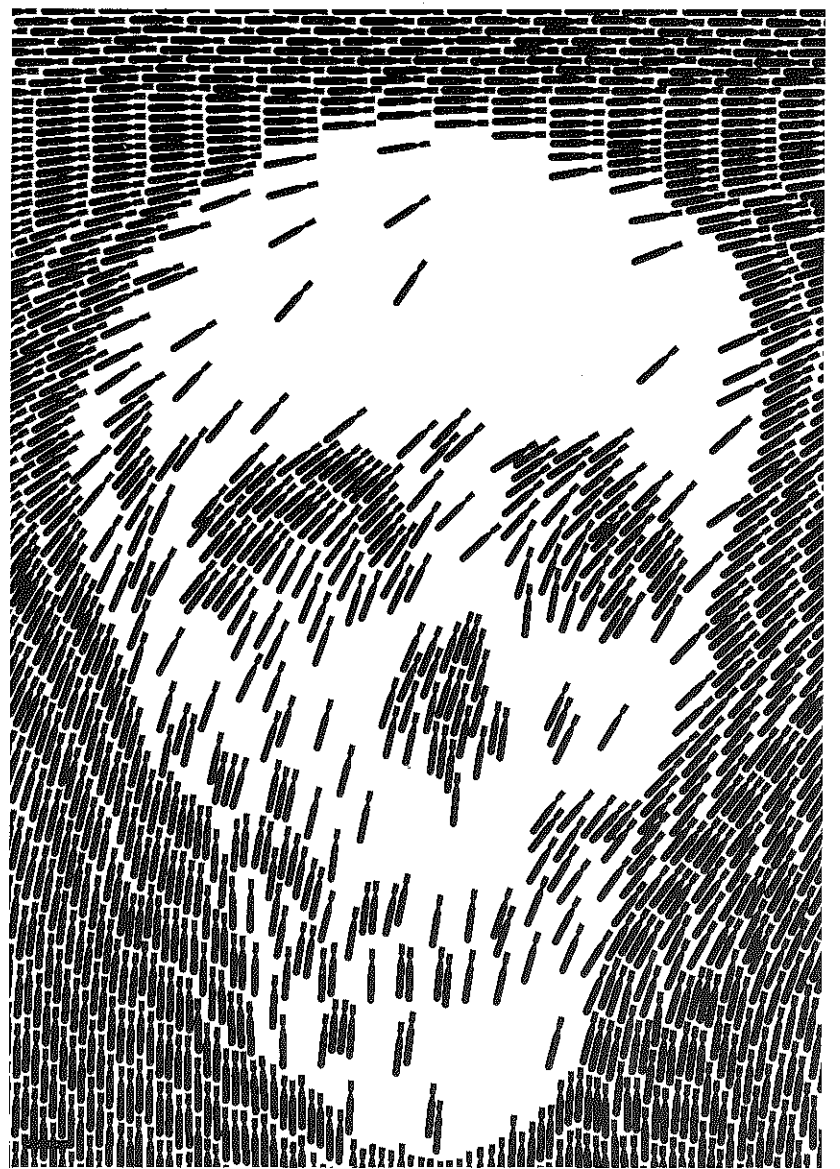
A 1984 survey of Canadian writing on disarmament and arms control* shows a marked increase in public concern, an increase which has been accompanied by a shift of focus. Where scholars and activists once stressed technological concerns—patterns, statistics and the hardware of war—they have turned to examining the psychological, medical and environmental impact of the politics and technologies of war.

Here are three books that reflect the same 'soft' trends, concerned with preserving sanity, the environment and the species. They encourage public participation and offer information about organizations and resources.

Facing the Danger is unified by the interviewers' search for the roots of activism. The Tottens focus on activist stars, although some names will not be familiar to some readers. An interesting alternative to the star system is found in Pat Farren's book *What Will It Take to Prevent Nuclear War? Grassroots Responses to Our Most Challenging Question* (Cambridge, Mass., Schenkman, 1983). Farren reminds us that 'among the contributors are very few famous names' because his goal was to discover anti-nuclear consciousness from below. His book is intended as a resource and a starting-point for classroom and community discussion.

There is little surprise in the revelation that Dr. Ernest Sternglass started with a 'concern for babies' or that George Mace's witnessing of 'over thirty-five atomic and hydrogen bomb blasts' stimulated his interest in anti-nuclear action. (One wonders why it took so many blasts to activate his consciousness.) Like their subjects, the Tottens work hard for a nuclear-free future. Yet their selection of activists makes me wonder who is to create, and who to enjoy, the future they seek. Of the 20 activists interviewed, eight are women. Given the consistent leadership of women in the field, the balance might have tipped in the other direction. The choice of interviewees does not adequately reflect an international peace movement: the activists all reside in the US, are mostly middle-aged, male, white and religious, with Christian religions predominating.

For all its good intentions, *Facing the Danger* misses the reality of who faces the danger. As well, it misses the vitality of the contemporary peace movement. It is directed too much to the old guard among the converted. It lacks the energy, depth



A poster by Shigeo Fukuda from *Art Against War*, by D.J.R. Bruckner, Seymour Chwast, Steven Heller (New York, Abbeville Press, 1984).

or breadth to inspire the newly conscious or the unaffiliated.

More successful is *Green Politics*, a lively discussion of Germany's Green Party that attempts to link Green consciousness on both sides of the Atlantic. Spretnak and Capra provide an intelligent and intelligible portrait of Green politics and personae. They admire the Greens but are willing to acknowledge conflicts within the Party. They don't try to whitewash the reality of the party.

The authors aim to demonstrate the possibility of translating Green politics to a North American setting. They point to various non-German influences. The Greens were influenced by the 1974 Club of Rome document *Limits to Growth*, by US economist E.F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*, by Ernest Callenbach's futuristic novel *Ecotopia* and the works of Ivan Illich.

Teachers and religious leaders make up a sizable portion of Green leadership, in contrast to the preponderance of lawyers in the US political parties. The authors stress the wide range of professions represented in the Green Party, but there is little indication of a comparable range of class interests. We are introduced to young-to-middle-aged,

white, mostly Christian political activists who are often more concerned about 'spiritual impoverishment' than about solving specific economic or social problems.

The romantic attachment to native American spiritual/ecological traditions is not linked to an effort to incorporate the political concerns or leadership of contemporary native Americans into the Green program. The authors do include native groups in their roster of 'green' organizations, but there is no indication that these groups consider themselves 'green' or that the long history of political and economic subjugation is specifically addressed by Green policies in or out of Germany.

One of the Greens' strengths is their media wisdom, something North American activists could learn from. They have not only mounted effective grassroots campaigns but major national advertising campaigns in television and other media. Although the authors are quick to point out the abusive oversimplification that has plagued US media coverage of the Green activities, they note that the Greens have captured media attention wherever they have traveled.

* *Arms Control and Disarmament: A Bibliography of Canadian Research 1965-1984*, by G. Köhler and V. Alia, Second Edition (monograph), Arms Control and Disarmament Division, Department of External Affairs, Ottawa, 1984.

The book's appendices are useful. They include a summary of Green Party structure that demonstrates the party's dedication to decentralization. There is a list of addresses of Green Parties around the world, including the one in Vancouver but not others in Canada, and a list of one hundred 'Green-Oriented Organizations' in the US. Included are black, Latin-American, native and other groups in an impressively multi-cultural roster that emphasizes again the limits of the Totten's list in *Facing the Danger*. The 'danger' is here more broadly defined—pro-ecology rather than simply anti-nuclear; thus, the field becomes open to a wider range of concerns and people.

Despite its concern for the concrete, *Green Politics* remains more a collection of sketches and visions than a blueprint for green action. Trained in physics, Capra has made a career of other people's struggles. His mysticism, feminism and pacifism belong on the bandwagon, rather than in the frontlines. He does, however, project an earnestness and sincerity. The attractively packaged book, for all its flaws, remains a welcome primer on Green history and politics.

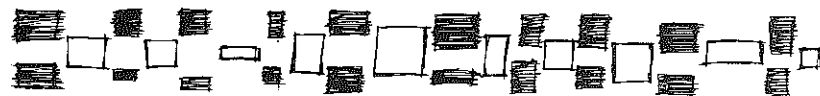
Give Peace a Chance documents the peace and anti-war music of several generations, including jazz, show music, the classical literature and the more familiar realms of pop, reggae, folk and rock. It is filled with high energy, good spirits and attractive photography. The focus on John Lennon and other superstars sometimes diverts from an enormous tradition that is better served by Clinton F. Fink's impressive bibliography/discography at the back than by the more striking material in front.

The volume documents popular involvement, especially in pieces like Sally Rayl's 'Peace Sunday: "We Have a Dream..."' But it sells with stars. It was produced from a 1983 catalogue for an exhibition at Chicago's Peace Museum, curated by the author, Marianne Philbin. Founded by Mark Rogovin, The Peace Museum celebrated its third birthday last November.

Give Peace a Chance is filled with black-and-white and colour plates, including a photograph of the guitar with which Lennon recorded the title song. Lennon-Ono memorabilia abound; there are excerpts from *Rolling Stone's* coverage of the 1970 press conference and material on FBI surveillance of Lennon. There are also anecdotes and articles by Pete Seeger, Joan Baez, Bob Marley, Stevie Wonder and others.

Green Politics is available in bookstores. *Facing the Danger* can be ordered from The Crossing Press, Box 640, Trumansburg, NY 14886, USA. To order *Give Peace a Chance*, write: COPRED, University of Illinois, 911 W. High Street, Room 100, Urbana, IL 61801, USA. COPRED, the Consortium on Peace Research, Education and Development, should have been listed among the 'peace' and 'green' organizations in the Totten and Capra-Spretnak books. A coalition with Canadian and international membership, it publishes *Peace Chronicle*, sponsors the journal *Peace and Change*, and maintains networks in many areas of peace action and scholarship.

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SILENCED

by Mikeda Silvera

(Toronto, Williams-Wallace, 1983)

The exploitation of non-unionized working migrant women of colour reveals how class, sex and race serve to marginalize minority women in rich, white nations. Accompanied by a brief introduction and polemical conclusion, *Silenced* is about West Indian domestic servants in Toronto. Based on interviews with ten women, it is an important first book by an activist in the West Indian community. As oral history, it provides an important forum for immigrant/migrant women to 'speak out' against low pay, poor working conditions, vulnerability to sexual and racist assault and the indifference of immigration officials. We also see the women begin a critical process of social and political organization.

Silenced is an exercise in feminist oral history, a powerful tool for breaking the silence of the oppressed and for validating women's subjective experiences. Here the researcher is the instrument through which women document and validate their own lives. Silvera created an intimate environment during interviewing and encouraged the women to participate in the editing process of the book. The author herself emerges as an impassioned/engaged eleventh voice revealing her cultural and political ties to the women. Yet the result falls short of the expectation. Although the interviews took three years to complete, each woman's interview emerges as little more than a static snapshot, as a short narrative seemingly suspended in time and place. We do not learn very much about how women, most of them single mothers separated from their children, have changed (or stayed the

same) as a result of the experiences they describe. Ultimately, there is no sense of dynamic exchange between researcher and subject.

Silvera presents a collective portrait of black domestics as legal slaves, as victims of manipulation and degradation, as lonely and isolated, as desperately missing their home and children. There are serious limitations. She stresses the powerlessness and passivity of these women to the point that it paralyzes the reader. What is never discussed are the numerous examples of the women's grim determination to save money, to complete a college course, to report their ill-treatment to the Immigration authorities. The very decision to take work in Canada represents a significant and decisive act born out of a determination to do something about one's poverty.

Nor is there much indication that these are in fact active women working out strategies to ensure their survival even under such oppressive conditions. Moreover, Silvera glosses over the differences among the women. While several older women tended to be defeatist about their predicament, talking in terms of venting their frustration peacefully by praying 'out to the Lord' during Sunday church service, many of the younger women voiced their anger over injustices and channeled that energy into productive avenues. They pursued education and applied for landed immigrant status. All the women at various times actively (though perhaps silently) protested against the conditions of work by quitting work and searching for another job. Even a painfully introverted woman who was raped

reported her employer's husband, a doctor, to the authorities. She was able to do so because of the support of another West Indian domestic she befriended in a park.

These issues might have been addressed. In spite of their isolation at work, these women showed a tremendous capacity for social bonding and mutual self-help. Through their connections with the local church, which for younger women performed a social rather than religious role, and also through community organizations, such as the Immigrant Women's Placement Centre and the Domestic Workers Group, West Indian domestics keep each other informed of new regulations and potential jobs. When unemployed, they are taken care of by friends until they find new work. Even those living in their employer's home offer to share their cramped living quarters. Indeed, initial contacts for jobs in Canada operate through networks of friends, family and co-churchgoers.

Too often in the literature on immigrant/migrant women, oral history replaces rather than enriches an analysis of the structural determinants of female migration and work. From the interviews we learn little about each woman's family and social and economic background. Some further discussion of the socio-economic and cultural realities of Caribbean society, with particular reference to the lack of economic opportunities for women and the predominance of single female heads of families, is needed. These women are not secondary wage-earners! Even in cases where women lived within a couple relationship with children, it was the woman who migrated to Toronto. We need to understand how economic compulsion for women may be governed by a different set of conditions than for men. Recent studies have shown that the penetration of the cash economy into 'peasant' societies often results in women, daughters and mothers becoming migrant workers earning cash abroad and sending remittances home for the family.

Silvera notes that not until 1955 did Canada consider the third world as a source of domestic servants. Recruitment then was rigidly controlled. Today, temporary employment visas ensure that women are recruited as a temporary solution to domestic labour shortages, part of a post-war trend to rely on increasingly larger supplies of cheap immigrant labour. These points are valid and important, although it may have helped to locate them within the larger historical context of Canadian immigration policy.

Silvera concludes *Silenced* with a black feminist polemic criticizing the women's movement for its failure to acknowledge European immigrant and migrant women of colour. As she notes, their struggles present a serious challenge to feminism and suggest the need to develop a more rigorous theory of oppression that integrates class and race with gender. Otherwise, the women's movement may have little impact on the struggles of non-white working-class women who (along with their men) occupy a minority position in a capitalist, racist patriarchy. As a feminist from a Southern Italian immigrant working-class background I applaud Silvera's motives, although I am bothered by the hostile tone. Silvera herself fails to discuss the nature of the relationship between the white employer/mistress and black em-

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